

**Testimony on**  
**Montgomery County's Capital Budget and**  
**Amendments to the Capital Improvements Program**

**On Behalf of the**  
**Damascus/Gaithersburg/Magruder/Watkins Mill High School Clusters**

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**MCCPTA Area Vice President**

**February 7, 2023**

Councilmembers,

This afternoon, I'm here on behalf of the Damascus/Gaithersburg/Magruder/Watkins Mill Clusters. We recognize the Council may be tempted to accept the reductions and postpone priorities outlined in the Board of Education CIP, but I'd like to remind the Council our children represent the best investment we can possibly make and delays in funding these projects does not change the fact that they are necessary in the immediate future. We strongly request that the Council find other ways of maintaining the CIP budget with a steady influx of funds whether through various taxes, Paygo or other suitable options, so that any and all planned or proposed projects move forward as planned.

As a result of the long delays taken by the County Council to get the projects at Neelsville MS and South Lake ES approved and moving forward, there has been a loss of trust between the communities involved and the County Council. In order to continue to build on the trust that was restored when the Council approved getting Neelsville and

South Lake ES back on track, it is an absolute MUST that the Council ensure that all of the upcoming projects are funded as they are all NECESSARY.

Our clusters have multiple projects all slated for either major construction or repair over the next few years. Many of these buildings are over 50 years old and in various states of disrepair. The funding for these upcoming major projects at Damascus High School, Neelsville Middle School and Magruder High School MUST be prioritized and not delayed any further. These projects have already been pushed back years, and we simply can not afford to postpone them further.

As our buildings age, the costs to maintain become more significant. We have a number of middle-aged (and elderly) buildings in our area that with proper care and investment, can continue to serve our communities well. Repair and/or replacing building systems is crucial to keeping these older buildings in usable condition. In addition to new HVAC systems at Watkins Mill HS and Gaithersburg MS being absolute necessities, Woodfield Elementary School has been without heat in many parts of the building recently. A cold building is not a conducive environment for learning. Since Woodfield is not on the list for any major renovations in any of CIP plans over the next few years, we urge you to make sure there is funding for their HVAC system to be repaired and/or replaced so these children and teachers don't have to wear their winter jackets throughout the school day. We also request that Damascus ES be considered for a renovation project soon. The school was built in 1934 and has not had any major renovations since 1980.

Our school buildings should not be disposable. They need to be maintained and we need to think more critically about preventative measures to ensure a long and healthful life for our buildings. Councilmembers, we respectfully request that priority is made going forward to ensure a steady stream of funds for the MCPS CIP Budget. With the cost of projects going up and the need for the proposed repairs and construction to continue without delay, it is imperative that the Council does not cut these budgets, but finds alternate ways to fund them.

Thank you for your time!